

charisma, his wit, his way with people, and his resources to help others pursue their goals through education.

For several years, Bennie taught night classes at Alabama's Southern Union Junior College and Auburn University, as well as GED classes at the local jail. Later, he established The Bennie Adkins Foundation, which to date has provided about 50 educational scholarships to noncommissioned Special Forces officers.

Bennie's dedication to the service of his country and to his fellow Americans never waned. For many years he traveled extensively, in what he described as his fourth career, "trying to instill patriotism in our young people." And according to President Obama in 2014, "the first thing you need to know is when Bennie and I met in the Oval Office, he asked if he could sign back up. His lovely wife was not amused."

I know that for Bennie's family and his community, this is a loss impossible to describe or to measure. My wife Louise joins me in sending our sincerest condolences to Bennie's daughter Mary Ann Adkins Blake (David), to his sons Michael Adkins (Christine), and Keith Adkins (Jaime), and to his many grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

To paraphrase his Medal of Honor citation, Bennie Adkins' extraordinary life reflects great credit upon himself, his family, and his country. May he rest in peace, and may God bless the United States of America.

REMEMBERING GENERAL CHARLES ELWOOD "CHUCK" YEAGER

Mr. MANCHIN. Mr. President, I rise today to honor an American hero and one of West Virginia's native sons who was larger than life and an inspiration for generations of Americans—General Charles Elwood "Chuck" Yeager. Chuck bravely served our Nation as a pilot for more than 30 years in the U.S. Air Force during World War II and Vietnam. When he became the first pilot to break the sound barrier he challenged each of us to test the limits of what is possible. I am grateful to have known this legendary West Virginian and to call him my dear friend.

Chuck truly embodied what it means to be from the Mountain State. Born in 1923 in rural Lincoln County, Chuck grew up the way many of us do in West Virginia—hunting and fishing and learning early to be respectful of nature and our fellow man. Like his father, A. Hal Yeager, who was a gaswell driller, Chuck showed an aptitude for mechanics, and by the time he was a teenager, he was able to assemble a car engine on his own. His work ethic and natural talent would serve him well throughout the rest of his remarkable life.

In 1941, Chuck enlisted in the Army Air Forces right out of high school and trained as a mechanic before heading to flight school. In 1944, he experienced

a harrowing encounter when his plane was shot down over German-occupied France. He and another American travelled on foot through mountainous terrain and snow toward neutral Spain. As they stopped to rest, the Nazis opened fire, wounding the man traveling with Chuck. Chuck carried him into Spain, where they met British forces. Despite the treacherous journey he had just endured, to everyone's astonishment, Chuck was determined to fly again. He climbed his way through the ranks, pursuing a return to combat duty, which was eventually granted. For his service, Chuck received the Silver Star, the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Bronze Star Medal, the Purple Heart, and the Air Medal. He also received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the Nation's highest civilian award, from President Ronald Reagan in 1985. There are so few Veterans left from the World War II era, and it is our responsibility and our privilege to recognize the service of these noble heroes.

In 1957, Chuck became an air squadron commander and then commander of the Aerospace Research Pilot School at Edwards in 1961. He also commanded a fighter wing and flew combat missions during the Vietnam war. He retired as an Air Force brigadier general in 1975, and in an honorary gesture, he was promoted to the rank of major general in 2005.

We all of course know the story of the day Chuck became the first pilot to break the sound barrier. On October 14, 1947, Chuck flew an orange Bell X-1 aircraft at nearly 700 mph and made history. Flying F-15 planes, he broke the sound barrier again on the 50th and 55th anniversaries of his pioneering flight, and he was a passenger on an F-15 plane in another breaking of the sound barrier to commemorate the 65th anniversary.

I knew Chuck very well and he was a dear friend to me and Gayle. As Governor, I was fortunate to host Chuck at least once a year for the One Shot Deer Hunt, which gives proceeds to helping the hungry. He told me so many incredible stories of his service, including all the intricate details of his legendary flight. I recall him telling me that the only reason he got to fly the Bell X-1 that day was because the previous pilot they asked wanted too much money. They offered Chuck an extra 60 dollars a month, and he jumped at the chance. Not only is the story true about Chuck pushing through with a broken rib, but he wasn't even supposed to break the sound barrier that day. He thought if he didn't go for it that first day, he wouldn't get another chance. Chuck truly had nerves of steel.

Long after his record-breaking flight, Chuck remained in our hearts as a symbol of patriotism and bravery. His life is full of tales of his bravery, his stoicism in the face of danger, and his determination to perform his duty no matter the cost.

The legacy Chuck leaves is such an important part of our heritage as West Virginians. Our little State has mined the coal that forged the steel that built the tanks and ships that keep our country the strongest in the world. It is an honor to remember Chuck as part of our military service heritage and our way of life that sinks deep into the roots of West Virginia's rich culture. I encourage all Americans to learn what they can about this legendary West Virginian.

Gayle and I are praying for Chuck's wife Victoria, daughters, Susan and Sharon, son, Don, and all who loved and admired him.

RECOGNIZING OREGON'S FIRST FEMALE EAGLE SCOUTS

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I am proud to be able to recognize Oregon's first female Eagle Scouts, the highest rank attainable in the Boy Scouts of America, or BSA. Evelyn Becker, Juliana Cimral, and Anya Kramer have demonstrated remarkable leadership, skill, and perseverance to earn this important distinction and have done it through an unprecedented pandemic.

For more than 100 years, the Eagle Scout rank has represented a tremendous accomplishment that is recognized in Oregon and across the country. To earn Scouting's highest honor, a Scout must demonstrate mastery of numerous skills and obtain a merit badge for each one, earn a position of responsibility within their troop, and complete a service project that will directly benefit their community. Until recently, girls and young women were not allowed to join BSA, but that finally changed for the better in February of 2019. Evelyn, Juliana, and Anya, Oregon's first three female Eagle Scouts, received their rank in October and will join others in receiving their official Eagle title in February 2021.

We can see examples of their skills and dedication to improving their community in the Eagle service projects they tackled. Juliana, a senior at Jesuit High School, employed her knowledge of and interest in bees and the importance these pollinators play in the food supply chain to build 25 bee houses that have increased the pollination and production of nearby gardens. Evelyn, a sophomore at Scappoose High School, built a fence to separate her local school from a busy highway and a bioswale to prevent children from falling into the water and to help improve the safety of her community. Anya, a freshman at Western Oregon University, spent months building a partnership between the West Linn Food Pantry and Period.org so that women in need would have access to feminine hygiene products, an often overlooked essential.

It has been exciting to see the BSA finally welcoming the other half of the population into their ranks. Each of these three women watched their brothers succeed in Boy Scouts while